

## GOD WITH US.—CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS.

P. J. BROWN.

"Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel—which being interpreted is, God with us." Matt. 1:23.

The approach of what we call Christmas, suggests some thoughts on this very familiar verse in the opening chapter of the New Testament. The verse in the main is a quotation from Isaiah 7; but the Evangelist Matthew favors us with an interpretation of "Immanuel" and says it means, God with us, and a wonderful meaning it is. Evidently in some sense, God was not with us, prior to the birth of Christ. But in the first place it is an important question, as to who is meant, by the pronoun "us." We assume and are not afraid of successful contradiction, that us, means the whole human race, all nations, all mankind, for Christ came to save the world; and not a select few—all who are elected to be saved and ordained unto eternal life, are those who themselves elect to receive, serve and obey him, and this all may do, as fast and as far as he is revealed to any of Adam's race. But in John 1:10 we read that "He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not." From this, it follows that Christ was in the world before he came in the flesh. And if there were any of us here at the same time he must have been with us, prior to the first Christmas morn. And it is a matter of no small concern as to how and why he became separated from us.

Dark and dreary indeed was the day of separation. While we were innocent and sinless, Christ, the maker of all things that were made, dwelt with us and we spake with him face to face, with the familiarity and ease, of the most intimate friends. But here comes the sad, old story. Sin entered the world, we partook of it, and we all became sinful, and as sin and holiness cannot dwell together any more than fire and water, separation was a natural consequence, if not an absolute necessity. God, in the power of Jesus the Son, took his departure from us, and returned to his dwelling place in heaven, in the bosom of his Father, where he was before the world began, or we had an existence.

Now our deplorable condition is aptly described by Paul in Eph. 2:12, as being aliens from God "living without hope and without God in the world." We could not release, or purge ourselves from sin, God could not be contaminated with sin, and so to all human appearances the separation was perpetual and eternal. In the natural course of events no one could be

born that was able to save his brother for all were sinners, the stream could not rise higher than the fountain. But in the omniscience of the eternal Trinity a plan of salvation was devised for us. And the plan was a suspension of the law of nature so far as it pertained to principle of generation, a virgin was sanctified and made fit to bear a son "conceived of the Holy Ghost," who was born without sin. Thus by this suspension, of natural law, divinity and humanity were enabled to meet in the person of Jesus Christ, a wonderful consummation, the angels desired to look into it. No wonder they sang in an innumerable host on that glorious Christmas night, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men."

Now my dear brethren, we shall soon enter upon another New Year of grace. I for one am growing old, I shall not be with you many more years; but allow me to admonish you to renewed effort toward a more consecrated life, one in harmony with the angel song on the memorable night of the Saviour's birth, and also in harmony with the requirements of his inspired truth. Let us not forget the all-important fact that he is God with us, only so far as we serve and obey him. This God with us is not universal but conditional. Let us in conclusion hear a few declarations bearing upon this feature in the subject. In the great commission given by Matthew, Jesus winds up by saying in reference to the converts to his Gospel, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always until the end of the world." St. Paul in winding up his arduous labors with the Corinthian Church says, "Finally brethren farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you," and by way of cheering up the somewhat dejected minds of the disciples at the thought of his leaving them, the Saviour says, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." John 14:18. And in order to convince them that he is able to be with us, he appeared in person to the Apostles several times, although the doors were closed to all ordinary ingress. So that I think the question as to both his will and ability to be with us spiritually, is settled.

Yes, my dear brethren, if we are faithful to Him, Jesus will be with us in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death. We may not only die with him, but in him, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." He will be with us in the grave.

The graves of all his saints he blessed  
And softened every bed.

Where can the dying members rest—  
But with their dying head."

He will be with us in the resurrection, for we shall "awake in his likeness, and be satisfied." We shall be with him in the judgment; yes, at his right hand and participate with him in that stupendous work. We shall be with him in glory, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. I Thes. 4:17. In the final conclusion I wish a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the Editor and family, to all the office hands, to all the readers and every body.

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## A DISCOVERY.

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Several years ago a correspondent of the London Times wrote that Professor Karabacek was kind enough to show him a fragment of a Gospel written on papyrus, which, from the style of composition was evidently written during the first century, A. D., and was therefore older than the Gospel of St. Matthew. The interesting thing about this older Gospel to us is that it gives us the parallel reading to Matt. 26:30-34 and runs as follows by lines and sentences.

1. "But after supper as they went out.
2. You will all take offense this night.
3. According to the scriptures, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."
4. Then Peter spake.
5. And if not I.
6. He said to him.
7. The cock will crow twice, and before that thou shalt deny me thrice."

The omission of the words to be found both in Matthew and Mark; "But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee," is noticeable.

Dr. Bickell lays stress upon the importance of the manuscript as being the earliest fragment of a written Gospel.

To us, who do not see a single trace of the passover in the Lord's last supper, it furnishes highly interesting and conclusive testimony against the fallacy of confounding or of mixing up the two separate festivals with each other.

Not desiring to stir up renewed discussion on the subject, I simply ask for its publication because of the inherent interest taken in this fragment of probably the oldest Gospel ever written by all well informed men who have studied the evolution of the sacred writings as we have them in the New Testament scriptures.

Montandon, Pa., Dec. 10, '95.

Distinguish between truth and your own views of truth.